

# VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

MAY 1985

ONE DOLLAR



# VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

Commonwealth of Virginia  
Charles S. Robb, Governor  
Commission of Game and  
Inland Fisheries

## Commissioners

Richard T. Spain, Waverly  
Chairman  
W. Frank Chapman, Jr., Salem  
Vice-chairman  
Glenn R. Croshaw, Virginia Beach  
David Fahnestock, Winchester  
Eli B. Jones, Jr., Tazewell  
Thomas C. Leggett, South Boston  
Frank T. Sutton, III, Richmond  
Charles R. Taylor, Reston  
Henry A. Thomas, Alexandria  
Latane Trice, Walkerton

## Officers

Richard H. Cross, Jr., Executive Director  
John P. Randolph, Assistant Executive Director  
Harry L. Gillam, Chief, Education  
Larry Hart, Chief, Lands and Engineering  
Jack M. Hoffman, Chief, Fish  
John H. McLaughlin, Chief, Law Enforcement  
Sam J. Putt, Chief, Administrative Services  
Jack W. Raybourne, Chief, Game

## Magazine Staff

Harry L. Gillam, Editor-in-Chief  
Mel White, Senior Editor  
Cindie Brunner, Art Director  
Carl C. Knuth, Staff Artist and Photographer  
Roy Edwards, Staff Photographer  
Carol G. Kushlak, Composition  
John Goodin, Editorial Assistant

Color separations by Lanman Dominion,  
Richmond  
Printing by Western Publishing, Cambridge,  
Maryland

*Virginia Wildlife* (ISSN 0042-6792) is published  
monthly by the Education Division of the Virginia  
Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries, Box  
11104, 4010 West Broad Street, Richmond, Virgi-  
nia 23230-1104. Second class postage paid at  
Richmond, Virginia and additional mailing offices.

Subscription department: 804/257-1449. Rates:  
one year, \$5.00; three years, \$12.50.

Submission guidelines available upon request.  
The Commission accepts no responsibility for  
unsolicited manuscripts, photographs or artwork.  
Permission to reprint material from *Virginia  
Wildlife* must be obtained from the writer, artist  
or photographer as well as the managing editor  
(804/257-1146).

Observations, conclusions and opinions expressed  
in *Virginia Wildlife* are those of the author and do  
not necessarily reflect those of the members or  
staff of the Commission of Game and Inland  
Fisheries.

*Dedicated to the Conservation of Virginia's Wildlife and Related Natural Resources*

Volume 46, Number 5

May 1985

## Features

### 3 A Dozen Flies for the Old Dominion

*by Harry Murray*

*While there are hundreds of flies to choose from, one of these  
12 can be counted upon to be productive on most any fishing  
day*

### 7 But What Can I Do? *by John Goodin*

*You don't have to be a professional biologist to become  
involved in conservation and wildlife—here are some ways a  
concerned individual can participate*

### 11 Blinds of all Kinds *by Curtis Badger*

*Building a good blind is more than the construction of some  
kind of screen to hide behind—we show you some of the many  
things that you need to consider*

### 14 Mud Puddle Bass *by Bruce Ingram*

*Boat too expensive? No time to travel? Can't stand using  
fussy lures? Then try drowning plastic worms in a farm  
pond*

### 17 What's in a Name *by John Warden*

*Liverleaf—and other names often belie the beauty of Virgi-  
nia's wildflowers—look at these names and the pretty faces  
that go with them*

### 22 Nesting Time on the Barrier Islands

*by Karen Terwilliger*

*Gathering in large colonies on the beaches of Virginia's Bar-  
rier Islands, sea and shore birds compete with people for use  
of the sand*

### 26 Virginia's Forgotten Striper Lake

*by Gerald Almy*

*This large lake near a major metropolitan area had more  
than good striper fishing—it has solitude*

### 29 March Journal *edited by Mel White*

*A new column on the history of fish and game management  
in Virginia begins; bird sanctuaries; hiking in Virginia and  
letters*

### 34 Bird of the Month *by John W. Taylor*

*The Wood Duck*

## Cover

Columbine, photo by Shirley M. Whitenack, Newport News.

The back cover: Fly fishing for trout, photo by Harry Murray. See page 3 for a selection  
of the best flies for Virginia streams.



# A Dozen Flies for the Old Dominion



(Top row, left to right) Gerbubble Bug, Gallasch Crawl 'n Twitch, Murray's Hellgrammite. (Second row) Brook's Dark Stonefly Nymph, White Zonker, Shenk's Ugly Sculpin. (Third Row) Foxes' Sulfur, Woolly Bugger, Adams. (Bottom Row) Mr. Rapi-dan, Shenk's Cricket, Hare's Ear Nymph.

**While a large selection  
of flies may be helpful,  
here are twelve winners  
for fishing Virginia's waters.**

**story & photos  
by Harry Murray**

Several years ago as my wife chauffeured us home from a trout fishing trip on a little spring creek, I received quite a surprise. Having accidentally slipped into a deep pocket just moments before we quit fishing that day and thoroughly soaking all of my midge dry flies, I took advantage of the ride home to dry and sort them. For some unknown reason I decided to count these dries as I returned them to their appropriate places. Good grief—483 flies in just that one box (I carry five others for nymphs, streamers, and standard dries).

About a month after this, we were fishing the Yellowstone River with Ray Hurley, who guides out of Livingston, Montana. My wife, Bobbie, had never fished that river before so I volunteered to select a dozen flies for her to start with. After starting Bobbie out in a good looking riffle corner, Ray and I walked on upstream to another hot spot. Curiously Ray inquired, "Just which 12 flies did you give Bobbie?" "The old dependables," I replied, "three Royal Wulffs, three Joe's Hoppers, three Spuddlers and three Black Woolly Worms." "Right on the money," said Ray. "She's better equipped than three-fourths of the anglers on the Yellowstone River."

How could we have been right in both of these situations? If I felt I needed a vest full of flies for that spring creek, how could I justify narrowing down Bobbie's selection to a dozen for the mighty Yellowstone?

The answer lies in experience; or the lack of it. I had fished that spring creek only enough to realize its trout were often super selective and would feed only on certain midges at specific times. Not knowing exactly what to expect I felt I had to carry a broad fly selection to meet their changing moods and the assorted hatches.

Admittedly, this may be the most exciting form of bass fishing. It certainly is the easiest technique with regards to strike detection; and for this reason I often have many beginners start with surface bugs.

When water temperatures are favorable, it is possible to take bass on the top all day long. As summer warms our rivers and lakes, we can still get good surface action in the morning and evening.

We are fortunate in Virginia to have several fellows turning out really first class surface poppers. These hard poppers, constructed of Daylite and cork, have an advantage over hair bugs of being more noisy in

the water. With a firm line hand stripping action one can make these spout water many feet. This would wake up any good bronzeback. When constructed of proper tails and hackles they can also be made to look alive while lying almost motionless.

One of my favorites is the *Gallasch Crawl 'N Twitch* (11). These are very durable poppers with excellent hooking qualities.

The surface deer hair bass bug is also another favorite of mine. I like the *Hair Gerbubble Bug* (12) best of all. Partly, I believe, because it had its roots here in Virginia and Maryland

many years ago; but primarily because it is such a good fish catcher.

This is a difficult bug to tie correctly but when this is accomplished it has the capacity to pass for a much larger food source in the water than it actually is. This is quite significant for a fly rodder. We often want to throw big bugs to catch big bass, but no one is fond of getting his ears pierced with hummingbird size bugs.

These two basic assortments are just that—basic; but as I sit here looking at them I realize I could put in many pleasure filled hours with these in the Old Dominion without having to dig deeper into my vest. □

*The author fishing a Gerbubble Hair Bug on the North Fork of the Shenandoah River during the summer. The bright fly line makes it easy to accurately follow the drift.*





story & photos by John Goodin

# But What Can I Do?

Usually confined to a  
spectator's role, the  
public has the  
opportunity to directly  
help with wildlife  
research.







*(Preceding page) A logging road in Montana's Flathead National Forest is a good place to search for wolf tracks. (Top) Once found, plaster casts are made of the tracks. (Above) Measuring a timber wolf paw print in Montana.*

The numerous facts from the lecture the night before were in the back of my mind as our complaining van grinded along the dirt road. This morning we were going to find the location of one of the study animals—a two-year-old Roosevelt elk bull. The surroundings were strange, but fascinating. We were moving through the blast zone of Mount St. Helens; logging roads wound around ridges and valleys, firs and alders grew on the lee side of slopes, and the ashy dust rose in a wake behind us.

We halted the van and, with the frequency set, the radio-transmitter gave a moderate blip. . . blip. . . blip. Around the bend we stopped again, but this time the signal was strong—and coming from the valley below us. A thoughtful scan with our binoculars revealed our subject. Frozen, with his nose and ears aimed toward us, the elk blended nicely into this foraging spot. After a moment he dropped his head and returned to his feeding, unprovoked by our presence.

We watched intently as cow elk and several calves also appeared.

The animals were counted and approximately 20 other locational and climatic conditions were recorded. Later that day the observations were added to a permanent file on the bull elk. The information being compiled would eventually be summarized and entered into a report on the Roosevelt elk herd and their activity around Mount St. Helens.

The above experience seems to be limited only to an elite few with a master's degree in wildlife management. While many studies similar to this are only carried out by professionals, there do exist several possibilities for the general public to become directly involved in assisting wildlife research and habitat improvement.

The availability of ecological programs which involve public assistance has grown over the past decade for a number of reasons. Overshadowing all has been cutbacks and cancellations in federal and local funding for these projects. Those persons





responsible for the management of our natural resources have created opportunities for concerned volunteers to assist them in research projects. In addition a heightened awareness of our natural environment and its importance to our survival has spurred public interest in participation. Many colleges began to offer field courses or credit for environmental research, which brought about an increase in college-aged involvement.

If one is interested in participating on a program to assist wildlife research or habitat improvement, it is important to know where to look.

The most popular programs involve national organizations.

EARTHWATCH has been matching professional researchers with eager amateurs since 1971. Their programs have been conducted in 64 different countries as well as over half of the U.S. and the projects are extremely varied. How would you like to help an ornithologist in the Christmas Islands or assist primate

research in Madagascar? Closer to home one might participate on a grassland project in Arizona or evaluate the effects of pollution on a salt marsh in Massachusetts.

Although the project fees are expensive (most foreign trips cost \$100.00 per day), they include all food, lodging, equipment, and instruction for the duration of the project. EARTHWATCH also offers many opportunities for archeological and paleontological investigation.

Wildlands Research is another non-profit organization that directs volunteer help to worthy research projects. Wildlands Research programs occur primarily in the U.S., with a few in Canada, and generally take place during the summer. Examples of research topics include: an investigation of a possible return of the Timber wolf to northern Montana, the study of environmental conditions on the Missouri Breaks wildriver for future recommendations, or a summer of glacial and riparian systems study in Wrangell-St. Elias National Park,



*(Top) Maryland bird bander Margaret McDonald and eager volunteer. (Above) Radio-tracking elk near Washington's Mount St. Helens.*

Alaska.

All projects involve camping and backpacking while offering a firsthand view of some of the lesser known areas in the country. Fees run \$360 for two- to three-week projects, \$710 for six-week projects, and other fees may vary. The cost includes funding for the research, project equipment, instruction and leadership. Personal equipment must be brought or shared and food is purchased as a group at the project site. College credit may be obtained at no extra cost.

For over 25 years the Sierra Club has offered service trips to various wilderness or national park areas in the U.S. The three basic types of trips—trail maintenance, clean-up and wilderness restoration—combine improvement of our natural environment with freetime to enjoy it.

The ten-day outings cost between \$85 and \$200 depending on the location and nature of the project. While these projects do not offer research opportunity, they do offer the chance to work in beautiful locations and assist habitat improvement.

The federal government gives persons a chance to work in our National Forests as volunteers. In addition, the Forest Service helps administer the Youth Conservation Corps for younger people. Volunteer programs in the government consist of habitat improvement, although specific jobs vary from one location to another.

Opportunities for volunteer environmental work in the Commonwealth also exist although they are more limited. This is due primarily because there are no specific state volunteer programs and most of the research involves a significant amount of background in the field. The value of volunteer help must also be weighed against the amount of instruction, organization, and time it costs the state to implement it.

Within the state park system, volunteers usually assist in trail upkeep, erosion control, and with public information. In the past, volunteers have also compiled a bird checklist for Seashore State Park and have participated on other projects appropriate to a certain park. Persons interested in helping with a project should contact the superintendent of a particular park or Mr. Irv Wilson, Programs Coordinator for Virginia State Parks.

As with state parks, the state forests rely essentially on individual interest for assistance. Chief of Forest

Management, Chuck Stanley, notes that although volunteer help has not been used that much, there is potential for greater involvement in the future. State forests have used volunteer help in the placing of gypsy moth traps, reforestation, site preparation, marking timber and public relations.

The Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries does not usually go outside the agency for volunteer aid in their research or other activities. Occasionally volunteers assist at hunting check stations or with waterfowl trapping, but most work is done by state employees. Bob Duncan, Assistant Division Chief for Game, sees the possibility for increased public participation, though he realizes that there are quite a few logistics in the way. The Non-Game Program has used volunteers indirectly with public help in the annual Bald Eagle survey. However, most projects require considerable technical knowledge.

One state-wide program, Biota of Virginia (BOVA), does need volunteer contributions. BOVA is a compilation of all recorded sightings of plants and animals within the state. There are many areas in Virginia

were records of some species presence are undocumented or do not exist. For BOVA to be complete and accurate it is important that there be a substantial amount of data. Perhaps the best allocation of volunteer assistance would be the verifiable reporting of such data.

Finally, one should not overlook participation in chapters of the Audubon Society, the Virginia Ornithological Society, or other wildlife organizations. These offer exceptional opportunities to view some of Virginia's wildlife and occasionally to aid wildlife research with projects such as the Christmas Bird Count and Virginia's Breeding Bird Atlas program.

Assisting wildlife research or habitat improvement offers a unique opportunity to contribute to the understanding of our natural environment. While these opportunities may be somewhat limited, they do exist and the enthusiastic can seek them out. If you have always viewed wildlife or natural scenes with envy, maybe soon you could become directly involved with a project to help your world. □

The following addresses will assist you in your search:

Forest Service, USDA  
P.O. Box 2417  
Washington, D.C. 20013

National Park Service  
Interior Building  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries  
4010 West Broad St., Box 11104  
Richmond, VA 23230-1104

Division of Forestry  
Box 3758  
Charlottesville, VA 22903

Virginia Wildlife Federation  
4602 D West Grove Ct.  
Virginia Beach, VA 23455

Izaak Walton League of America  
Tom Yowell, President  
P.O. Box 42  
Nokesville, VA 22123

Virginia Forestry Association  
1205 E. Main St.  
Richmond, VA 23219

Wildlife Society Virginia Chapter  
James D. Fraser, President-Elect  
Room 106, Cheatham Hall  
Virginia Polytechnic University  
Blacksburg, VA 24061

Audubon Naturalist Society of The  
Central Atlantic States  
8940 Jones Mill Road  
Chevy Chase, MD 20815

Sierra Club Outing Department  
530 Bush Street  
San Francisco, CA 94108

Wildlands Research  
3 Mosswood Circle  
Cazadero, CA 95921

Smithsonian Institution  
1000 Jefferson Dr., SW  
Washington, D.C. 20560

EARTHWATCH  
10 Juniper Road  
Box 127  
Belmont, MA 02178

Mr. Irv Wilson, Programs  
Coordinator  
Virginia Division of Parks  
State Office Building  
Capitol Square  
Richmond, VA 23219

Virginia Society of Ornithology  
Mrs. Thelma Dalmas  
520 Rainbow Forest Drive  
Lynchburg, VA 24502



A photograph of a hunter in full camouflage gear, including a hood and jacket, holding a rifle. The hunter is positioned in the foreground, looking out over a body of water. The background shows a line of trees and a clear sky. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

# All Kinds of Blinds

Building your first blind can be a rewarding experience when you follow a few simple steps.

story & photos by Curtis Badger



**M**y first duck blind had a lot in common with a red and white 1957 Chrysler. It wasn't that the duck blind had tail fins and a V-8 engine: the Chrysler was my first car, and as such occupies a very important position on my personal list of Famous Firsts. Probably everyone has such a list: first car, first date, first job, and, if you are a duck hunter, your first duck blind.

The reason the Chrysler and the duck blind have so much in common is that both, in memory at least, are still a little larger than life, and in a puzzling way, they were very much alike. As cars go, the Chrysler was what might be charitably called a rust bucket, and the duck blind provided a graphic definition of the term "blind." That's what the ducks had to be not to see me crouched in it.

In the post-Chrysler years, I've driven nicer cars, and I've hunted in some pretty opulent blinds, but non stirs the blood and brings back the memories like those famous firsts.

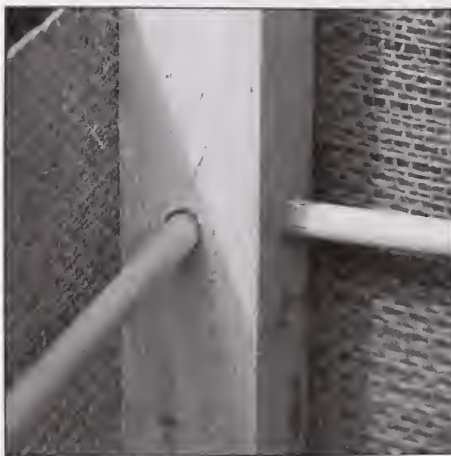
The Chrysler had rusted rocker panels and a nasty dent in one of its huge fins, but those were marks of character, I thought, when I handed over my \$450 and drove it off the used car lot. I was 18 and this was my first car. It was all mine. No more negotiating for weekend shifts in the family Ford.

If you are familiar with American cars of the late Fifties, you will know about the auto designers' curious fetish for massive tail fins. The Chrysler had enough sheet metal to make three of today's Hondas. The car was truly a glittering mounument to conspicuous consumption; it was so large you needed a tugboat to parallel park it.

Because it was my first car, I remember warmly all its little quirks and idiosyncracies. It did not have a conventional gear shift. Instead, you pushed little buttons on the left side of the dash to shift gears. Chrysler's team of designers must have decided that pushing buttons to shift gears was much more elegant than thrashing about a lever on the steering column.

My first duck blind shared a lot of design peculiarities with the Chrysler. My friend Bill Sterling and I built the blind on a wooded point on Phillip's Creek, which is in Northampton County on the Eastern Shore. We used trunks of dead cedars as posts, and we nailed to them various sections of wire appropriated from an unused dog pen. After threading

cedar boughs through the openings of the wire, we declared our blind a success. It blended nicely with the cedars that lined the point, and, it was only a few feet from the water's edge. We dragged a huge piece of driftwood into it, which served as a combination seat and gunrack, and we were ready for opening day. I crouched behind the blind and scanned the horizon for ducks. Bill walked a few paces down the creek shore and assessed our construction effort, declaring it a success. "If I were a duck, it would sure fool me," he said.



*The authors blind built with burlap (bottom), 2 x 2 lumber and dowels (top).*



It was early in the morning on opening day when we discovered our first mistake. We walked around the wooded point in the pre-dawn darkness, carrying decoys, shotguns, and a day pack filled with sandwiches and a thermos of coffee. As we rounded the point and neared our blind the water began to deepen. "Are we in the right place?" asked Bill. "I don't remember all this water being here."

We sloshed around the point to the blind and went inside. We were standing in twelve inches of water, and my hip boots had a persistent and unpatchable leak at the 11-inch level. It had been low tide when we built the blind, and our design plan had not taken into account the rising of the tide.

So we put out the decoys and retreated to the higher elevations of the nearby woods and waited for the tide to subside. In a couple of hours our blind was once again dry, but then we discovered design error number two. We had built the blind facing the rising sun, and by that time the sun was high over Hog Island Bay, and Bill and I looked like we were under a spotlight every time we peeked over the edge of the blind. Also, as we discovered when the first two flights of black ducks avoided us by a good hundred yards, we did not have enough protection overhead. The blind looked great at eye level, but few ducks approached our layout from that altitude.

The blind became affectionately known as Bufflehead Point, and it was a terrific spot for hunting those little ducks that barrelled around the twisting bends of Phillip's Creek at full throttle, flying only inches above the surface of the water. Despite all the drawbacks of the blind, Bill and I spent many enjoyable hours there. Like driving the Chrysler, we had to learn to ignore the shortcomings and accept the blind on its own terms. As long as we didn't hunt on sunny mornings at high tide, we did very well.

My wife insists that I enjoy planning and building blinds more than I do the actual hunting. And she is probably right. There is something about building a blind—whether it's for waterfowl, deer, turkey, or photography—that fulfills some basic need. Building a good blind is like making a good camp; it gives a feeling of contentment and completeness.

In Ernest Hemingway's story "Big Two-Hearted River," Nick Adams returns to the Michigan woods after suffering serious war injuries. He hikes along a river he had fished as a youth and makes camp, and the process of hiking, camping, and fishing holds certain curative powers for him. Hemingway describes the process of making camp in exquisite detail: "He had made his camp. He was settled. Nothing could touch him. It was a good place to camp. He was there, in the good place. He was in his home where he had made it."



Just as making camp is more than simply finding a place to pitch your tent, building a proper blind is more than making a place in which to hide. It is the countless small tasks of making camp that help Nick Adams heal his wounds, so too it is the act of building a blind that brings satisfaction, at least as much so as hunting from it.

Building a good blind is more than constructing some kind of screen to hide behind. There are many things to consider. If it is a permanent, stationary blind, it must blend in well with the surroundings. A blind built on a point of cedar woods should be trimmed with cedar boughs; a blind in a cordgrass marsh should be trimmed with cordgrass. If you are building a waterfowl blind, consider the blind's proximity to water, taking into account the rising of the tide, and take the time to learn as much as you can about the game you are hunting.

If you want to hunt black ducks, for example, it would probably not be wise to build a blind on a deep, rapidly flowing channel. Black ducks, being surface-feeders, prefer shallow saltmarsh ponds and creeks. Also, blacks are among the wariest of ducks, so your blind should blend in well with the surroundings. It should not call attention to itself. One of the best blinds for hunting black ducks, as well as other species, is a low-profile layout boat camouflaged with cordgrass, or whatever happens to be growing in the area you'll be hunting. A small layout boat nestles among the stalks of cordgrass nicely, and it has the additional advantage of being portable.

Location of a blind should also take into account the direction of the prevailing wind. A blind built for deer hunting should be downwind from the probable approach of the deer so the animals will not pick up your scent. Wind direction is important when situating a duck blind because the birds will flare into the wind when they approach your spread of decoys, so use the location of the blind, the position of the decoys, and the direction of the wind to get the most advantageous shots.

A blind can be as simple or as elaborate as taste and budget allow. There is no rule that hunting has to be an uncomfortable sport, although many duck hunters seem to take masochistic pleasure in exposing themselves to the elements. A blind can shelter the hunter from the rain and snow and still be an effective

hunting tool. I've seen pit blinds built for hunting geese that more closely resemble a hunting lodge than a blind. They have heaters, comfortable seats, and even small stoves to warm the coffee and the oyster stew. A good rule of thumb in constructing a blind is the architectural dictum, "Form follows function."

Of course, all blinds need not be used for hunting. I probably spend more time in blinds with a camera than with a shotgun. Blinds provide perfect vantage points from which to photograph wildlife, and they're the ideal place to hide when you want to find out what great blue herons really do when they think no one is watching.



*This simple blind is good for wildlife photography.*

Commercial blinds are available for photography, bird watching or nature study, and although they can be very effective and sophisticated, they can also be very expensive. I built one a while back using burlap, 2 x 2 lumber, and wooden dowels. It is inexpensive, effective, and portable—perfect for wildlife photography. Here's how to do it:

Go to your local hardware or garden supply store and buy a 3 x 12-foot roll of burlap. The stuff is made for protecting bushes and plants in the winter and costs about \$5.00 per roll. Also get four 4-foot 2 x 2's, eight 3/8-inch x 3-foot wooden dowels, and some tacks or a heavy duty stapler. You'll also need a drill with a 3/8-inch bit and a hammer and small saw.

The 2 x 2's act as corner posts, and

the burlap is tacked or stapled to them at 3-foot intervals. I used 4-foot 2 x 2's because they leave an extra 12 inches of wood to sharpen and drive into the ground, thus preventing the blind from blowing over.

With the drill and 3/8-inch bit, drill a hole about 1/2-inch deep near the top and bottom of each 2 x 2. When you set the blind up, place the 3/8-inch dowels along the top and bottom of each side, sliding the ends into the countersunk 3/8-inch holes. The dowels will brace the blind, keeping the sides taut and making the frame rigid. When you want to dismantle the blind, simply remove the dowels. You will probably have to experiment with the length of the dowels to get a snug fit.

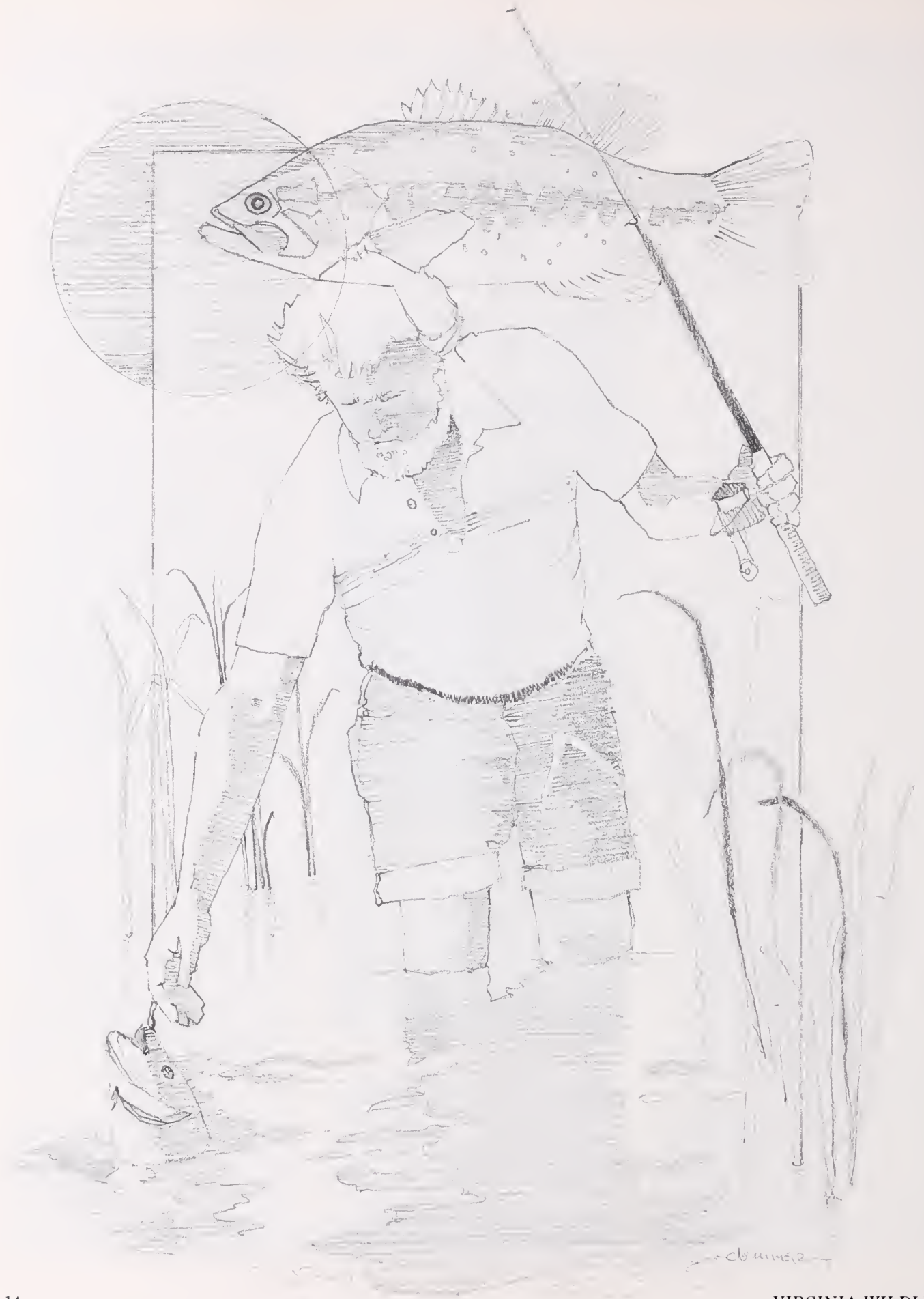
With the 12-foot roll of burlap you can build a 3-foot square blind, or you can leave the back open and make it a little larger. (You'll need longer dowels.) If you plan to invite your friends, get extra rolls of burlap.

The only problem with this design is that it doesn't have protection overhead. This can be easily remedied with another piece of burlap or a piece of camo-cloth. The blind is snug; there's just enough room for the camera, tripod, and you. If you plan to use the blind for photography, set your camera on a tripod at a comfortable height, and cut the burlap to make an opening for the lens. You'll need to make the opening larger than the lens to allow for movement of the camera.

Your total cost for the blind should be less than \$15.

Whether your blind is for hunting, photography, or nature-watching, be sure to get the permission of the landowner before constructing it. Waterfowl blinds are also subject to various state and local laws, and in most Virginia counties permits are required for waterfowl blinds. Be sure you know the law in the locality in which you intend to hunt. (The Game Commission publishes a pamphlet on waterfowl blind regulations. Write to Publications, Virginia Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries, P.O. Box 11104, Richmond, Virginia 23230-1104.)

And one more thing. Building a blind is a rewarding experience, one that you might want to share with a youngster you might happen to know. There are few better ways to learn about nature, and you could help a young hunter or photographer make an important addition to his or her list of famous firsts. □





# Mud Puddle Bass

**Simple, easy, inexpensive fishing—that's what you get from a farm pond.**

**by Bruce Ingram**

**illustrations by Cindie Brunner**

**F**ed up with the high cost of bass fishing? Are you tired of having to travel miles to reach a prime bass lake? Will you have to mortgage the house to buy a new depth finder?

There may be help for you. Take a few plugs and plastic worms to the nearest farm pond. These mini-impoundments look like oversized mud puddles if you're used to fishing lakes. Don't let a pond's size bother you. Pro bassing organizations may not hold tournaments in farm ponds, but lunker largemouths thrive there nevertheless.

I relish the rare occasions when I am able to visit the large impoundments of Virginia. But the sad facts are that I don't own a boat, that the nearest lake is a 120 mile round trip, and that the equipment and lures required to fish a lake effectively are expensive.

Furthermore, once I arrive at Smith Mountain, Lake Moomaw, or wherever, it is almost impossible—with my limitations—to catch largemouths. Renting a boat or hiring a guide is costly. And given the sheer size of the Old Dominion's lakes, it is difficult to determine where the bass are, when they will be feeding, and what they will be feeding on. The odds for success can be great.

Finally after enduring years of frustration, I began fishing farm ponds. My luck changed immediately. Employing a few simple tactics will help you land plenty of bucketmouths, too.

I like to arrive an hour before sunrise and fish the outer rim of an impoundment. Stop at least twenty feet from the shore and make casts that land about fifteen feet out from the bank. Pond bass are extremely skittish from dodging cows and horses, so tread softly.

There's another reason for a quiet approach. Before dawn, bass often seek out bluegills in the shallows. Since chunky male bluegills are already fertilizing eggs and guarding nests there, the shallows can become quite crowded. This can be advantageous for largemouth bass—and for the angler.

At this time I like to cast floating-diving plugs over the bluegill spawning beds. Gently twitch the artificial

so as to imitate a stunned panfish. Remember that you may not be able to see largemouth feeding. On most summer mornings, though, bass will be near the bank at least for a few minutes. Be prepared for a quick strike in the dark.

Some final tips concerning early morning pond bassing. In Virginia, many farm ponds are stocked with red-ear sunfish and bluegills. Lures that imitate a panfish's shape and color are especially effective.

Also, bluegills commence spawning when the surface temperature reaches the 65-70 degree range. Obviously when the thermometer is at that reading, you will find the greatest concentration of bream near the shoreline. Periodic monitoring, either visually or with a thermometer, can help determine when panfish begin the reproductive process. Pond bass are opportunists and where bluegills go, they are sure to follow.

Shortly after daybreak, largemouths leave the shallows for deeper regions. A pond's temperature along the bank is usually too warm for bass to remain long.



Now switch to plastic worms. There's no need for a wide variety of colors, sizes, and tail shapes. High priced, multi-colored crawlers with glitter all over aren't required either. You don't even have to ponder the merits of crankbaits versus spinnerbaits. Leave those expensive lures at home when pond fishing. Just bring a few six-inch green, black and purple worms, and you're set for the rest of the morning.

There are as many different ways to rig plastic worms as there are fishermen who use them. With pond bassing, perhaps the simple approach is best. You don't have to buy sliding sinkers, special reels, or any of the other paraphernalia associated with lake fishing. Just tie the

line directly to the hook, or if you prefer, to a swivel.

Ponds aren't very deep so there's no problem with getting a worm down to the bass. An unweighted worm also moves more naturally through the water. Whether or not you imbed the hook into the crawler depends on a pond's algae and structure.

The various methods of working plastic worms also depend on the individual. When pond fishing, I employ the clock technique with the angler being at six o'clock. I toss the worm along the shoreline to my left first and then clockwise until I finish by working the right shoreline.

By fishing worms this way, you can reach bass which have lingered along the bank, some that are in transit, and others that have settled into deeper water. Again the great thing about pond largemouths is that you know where they are. On a lake, my plastic worm may not be within fifty feet of a bass. On a pond, sooner or later I will cast to practically every fish.

Of course, the big question with plastic worms is when to set the hook on a run. Many bass veterans recommend setting the hook the moment a largemouth engulfs a worm. Others allow their quarry to swim for various amounts of time.

The best answer may depend on the feel of your line when a bass first mouths your crawler. When a pickup feels strong, strike immediately. If a bass seems hesitant in his actions, let him take the worm until the run seems steady.

If that advice doesn't work 100 percent of the time, welcome to worm fishing. My experience is that plastic worms are the overall best pond lure and also the most frustrating. You will probably receive more strikes on fake crawlers and, unfortunately, endure more misses. Just when you think you have mastered the technique, the bass humiliate you. Trial and error is a good way to learn.

Whenever you are visiting someone's pond, there are several rules of courtesy which insure continued access. I always like to stop by the landowner's home and ask if it is all right to fish, even though I may already have written permission. If I'm going fishing early one morning, I call the day before.

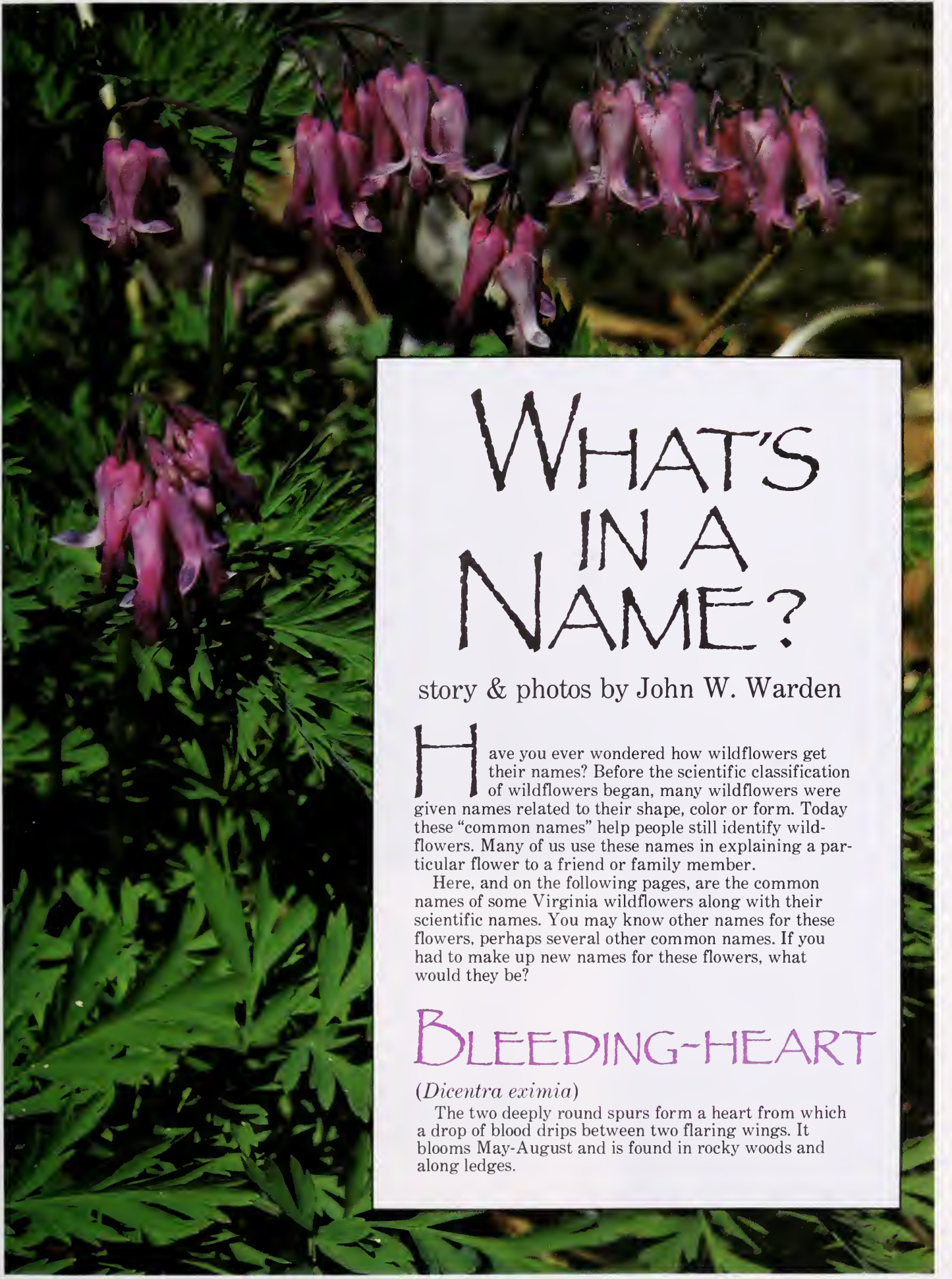
It is also a good idea to ask the pond's owner if he has any wishes concerning fish which are landed. Because of a bluegill's tendency to over multiply, some owners like for you to keep all panfish caught. Others prefer that all bass be released. And just about anyone appreciates a freshly filleted bass.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, there are over 2.1 million farm ponds in the country. Virginia, with over 60,000 full time farms, has thousands of stock ponds. Many of these impoundments lie just on the outskirts of cities.

Because ponds are so convenient, they make for pleasurable family outings. My wife and baby daughter sometimes accompany me on afternoon excursions. When my child is older, I hope to teach her how to fish. A farm pond is a great place for a young person to first experience the joys of fishing.

So the next time you're hankering for some inexpensive, uncomplicated bassing, journey to the nearest mud puddle. Cultivate a farmer's friendship, and you won't need any sonar devices to catch largemouths. □





# WHAT'S IN A NAME?

story & photos by John W. Warden

**H**ave you ever wondered how wildflowers get their names? Before the scientific classification of wildflowers began, many wildflowers were given names related to their shape, color or form. Today these "common names" help people still identify wildflowers. Many of us use these names in explaining a particular flower to a friend or family member.

Here, and on the following pages, are the common names of some Virginia wildflowers along with their scientific names. You may know other names for these flowers, perhaps several other common names. If you had to make up new names for these flowers, what would they be?

## BLEEDING-HEART

(*Dicentra eximia*)

The two deeply round spurs form a heart from which a drop of blood drips between two flaring wings. It blooms May-August and is found in rocky woods and along ledges.





## ROUND-LOBED LIVERLEAF

(*Hepatica americana*)

The lobes of the leaves are rounded of this wildflower which is found at altitudes up to about 3,500 feet in March and April. The flowers may vary in color from white, blue, pink or lavender. A member of the buttercup family.





# LADY'S SLIPPER

(*Cypripedium acaule*)

A member of the orchid family, this wildflower grows in pine-dominated, dry forests at low and middle altitudes where it begins to bloom in late April. It is also known as "Moccasin-flower."



## FIRE-PINK

(*Silene virginica*)

This five-petaled flower is star-shaped in appearance, and the red color adds to its name. It grows in dry areas along roadsides from April throughout spring. It can be found in open woods along rocky slopes. A brightly colored flower that is hard to miss seeing.





# TRILLIUM

*(Trillium erectum)*

Three petals plus three sepals plus three leaves easily establish the name for this wildflower. Due to its unpleasant scent, it is also known as "stinking Willie." It flowers from March-June in rich woods at practically any altitude.

# It's Nesting Time on Virginia's Barrier Islands

Spring is the time to share our beaches,  
as Barrier Island birds return to the Commonwealth.

by Karen Terwilliger

Spring is the time for colonial nesting birds to complete their long journey back to their breeding grounds on Virginia's Barrier Islands. This group of 25 highly specialized bird species has spent their winter in the tropics and now return to the fragile environs of these islands to raise their young. These are not ordinary birds and, for the most part, do not occur elsewhere in the state. The Barrier Islands are the only place in Virginia where they maintain stable breeding populations and find their nesting and feeding requirements.

As the birds return, they select their nesting sites. The colonial nesters are well-named—they do not establish and defend substantial territories as do most other birds; instead, they densely pack their nests into a suitable area, each within inches of one another in the colony. One group of these colonial waterbirds, the waders, consists of seven species of herons and egrets. They build their stick nests in the beach shrubs and trees. Often up to seven species can be found nesting in the same shrub clump.

Ten species of terns, gulls, and skimmers make up the group known as the sea-birds; these nest on the open sandy or shelly-covered beach. These birds, since their nests are extremely vulnerable to weather, tides and disturbance, are most susceptible to destruction. They build their nests by making a shallow depression or scrape in the sand, using little or no vegetation in its construction. It is indeed an amazing feat for these birds to incubate eggs for nearly a month, then tend their young for another several weeks under such extreme conditions. It is during this critical time that the success of all these colonial nesters depends not only on natural conditions, but on us, as we will see. These birds can endure extreme heat and winds with little problem. One adult sits on the eggs while the other feeds, then there is a changing of the guard, so that both parents are able to maintain their energy and strength. If the nest were left untended for even a short while, the sun would quickly heat the eggshells to an extent that the life within them would be destroyed. The parents must therefore keep a close vigil, remaining at the nest at all times.

Colonial birds, as a general rule, lay their eggs in May and tend their young throughout June and July. Thus the peak of their breeding activity occurs during the peak of our summer recreation. When the birds arrive on the islands in April, there is little human activity, so they select their nesting sites without regard to this factor. But from Memorial Day on, they find a different situation—boats coming to shore, people setting up camp and picnics, and a flurry of traffic back and forth to swim and fish in the surf. Surprisingly enough, most people do not realize that a group of birds, steadfastly remaining on the beach, is nesting in the near vicinity. Often, when the nesting colony is approached, the birds (especially gulls and terns) will become noisy and aggressive, chattering and diving overhead to get these human onlookers to leave. At this point, some people get the notion that the birds might indeed be defending their eggs or young, so they begin to look around for them; but there is nothing harder than trying to find perfectly camouflaged eggs and chicks on a sandy, shell-covered beach. Chances are you'll step on many more than you'll find. Most people then think that the





D.C. Smith



birds aren't nesting because they don't find anything and continue their path right through the colony.

There is plenty of beach for both recreation and nesting, but a measure of caution and responsibility should be exercised. If you see any birds sitting in groups (either on the beach, in shrubs, or in the marsh), it is safe to *assume that they are nesting*. You should take a detour, missing the colony by a safe distance and allow the birds to continue incubation.

I have seen the results of jeeps or dune buggies having driven right through a colony, or picnic areas set up in a colony because of the nice, high ground. I have seen people throw rocks and shells at the parent birds as they swoop to defend their young, as if these were the extras from Alfred Hitchcock's *The Birds*. But these birds are simply trying to protect their young, which are being trampled by these unthinking intruders. The longer the intruders stay, the more chance of overexposure to the eggs and young, ruining the colony's nesting attempts for the year.

All this can be avoided with awareness on our part. Just think: you're sharing the beach with some of the rarest birds in Virginia. If we take the responsibility to assure that these birds continue to use our Barrier Islands as their breeding grounds, we can be more aware and appreciative of their presence, always remaining at a safe distance and never making them leave their nests even for short periods.

The Virginia Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries and the Nature Conservancy are very concerned about the welfare of these species. We have been conducting annual surveys to monitor colonial bird populations and nesting success; this has been funded by taxpayers' contributions to the Non-Game and Endangered Species Program. We are also installing signs at major colony sites on the Barrier Island beaches to alert the public to the birds' presence. We are taking every measure to provide these unique birds safe breeding grounds. You can help: respect their rights on the beaches and share these beautiful islands. □



Karen Terwilliger



(Preceding page) A common tern, one of the ten species of beach nesting sea birds in Virginia. (Left) Young great egrets, these large snowy birds are commonly seen in tidewater Virginia.





Karen Terwilliger



Karen Terwilliger

*(Above) The black skimmer is unique among Virginia's fishing birds. (Left) Highly camouflaged, a least tern nest is easily destroyed by people using the beach carelessly.*



# LEESVILLE



*These young anglers teamed up to land a nice striper.*

story & photos  
by Gerald Almy

**W**ith such famous waters as Gaston, Buggs Island, the Roanoke River and Smith Mountain Lake, Virginia is widely considered one of the top inland striper fishing states in the country. But there's one lake tucked away in south central Virginia that produces striped bass fishing every bit as exciting as these big name waters, without the crowds. That lake is Leesville, a 3,400 acre Appalachian Power Company reservoir situated just downstream from Smith Mountain Lake on the Roanoke River, south of Lynchburg. Over the years, this sleeper lake has become one of my favorite haunts for chasing that intriguing gamefish, *Morone saxatilis*.

Over many fishing trips to Leesville in recent years, I have never encountered more than two or three other fishing boats on the lake, and waterskiers are also a rare sight. At times I've set out under the glow of an orange dawn on the lake and not run into another soul until I was ready to pull out my boat, pack up my gear and head home. This is the kind of solitude one expects to find on a remote trout stream or a secluded stretch of a smallmouth river. But on a large striped bass lake near a major metropolitan area? I'm amazed and thankful every time I enjoy this precious commodity of solitude on Leesville.

Besides lack of pressure, Leesville is small enough that it's really *fun* to fish. Here is a lake, you feel when first pulling up to its wooded shores, that can be readily deciphered with just a bit of effort. Sometimes when you set out on a lake 10 or 20 times as



# I L L E Virginia's Overlooked Striper Lake

**You don't need to sacrifice solitude for exciting striper fishing in south central Virginia.**

big as this 3,400 acre impoundment, it's easy to feel intimidated by the sheer size of the water and the vastness of the area where stripers could be roaming. I use a 16-foot aluminum bass boat with a 35 hp outboard for fishing Leesville, and this seems to be just about the perfect craft for covering this size body of water. But many of the boats you see on the lake are even smaller—12- to 14-foot carpetoppers with 7½-10 hp kickers. Unless the weather is stormy, this size boat is perfectly adequate for seeking out Leesville's stripers.

Yet in spite of its relatively small size, Leesville is big enough to grow enormous stripers. I've been in the boat when fish over 27 pounds came aboard, and that day we saw other fish slashing around us that were even larger.

If small lake size, big fish, and lack of pressure weren't enough attractions, Leesville is also one of the loveliest lakes in the Old Dominion. Swaddled in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, it features heavily wooded, steeply-sloping shorelines that are only lightly developed in a few areas.

Leesville is a pump-back lake. Water is released into it from Smith Mountain Lake upstream to create electricity, and the water is then pumped back up into Smith Mountain again. As you would expect, this makes for widely fluctuating water levels, and it's not unusual for the lake to raise or drop 12 feet in a week. The level is usually at its highest by the weekend, and this is when the striper fishing is generally best. Early in the week it's at its lowest levels and striped bass action may be a bit slower.

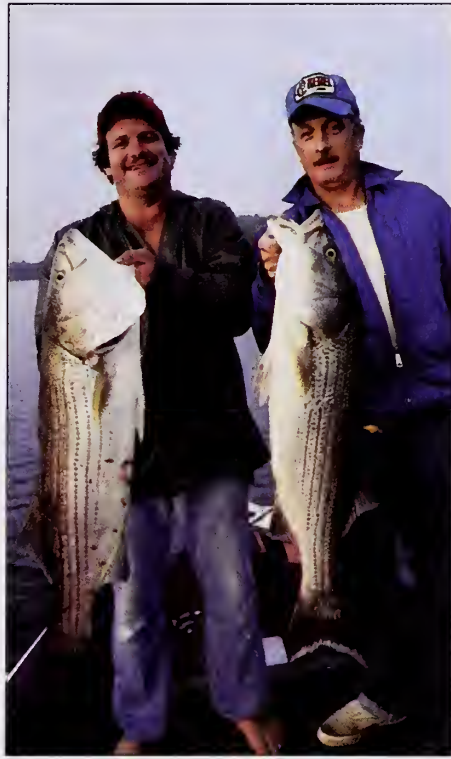
The pump-back operation seems to be beneficial to the stripers, on the whole. It keeps the waters cool, with the releases from deep in Smith Mountain, and it keeps the lake well oxygenated, with the constant circulation of the water. Fish caught are corpulent and hard-fighting, and they are usually stuffed to the gills with gizzard shad. The stripers are also extremely abundant. With a flasher or graph recorder you can mark hundreds of them concentrated on

flats, channel edges and points on summer or fall days.

There are doubtless a few locals who catch Leesville's stripers consistently in spring, but my best results come during summer and fall months. Three methods have proven reliable for the June through October outings I make on the lake: trolling, live bait fishing, and casting with artificials.

Trolling is considered boring by some. But if you go at it properly, this can be a very absorbing fishing technique. Don't just toss a lure overboard, pop open a soda and cruise leisurely around the lake. Rather, *work* at your fishing. Determine the level the bait and stripers are holding at with a depth finder, pinpoint the type of structure they're hovering over, then choose your lures and tackle to put your offerings exactly where the fish are. Work that level and the appropriate structure diligently, steering curving, twisting boat patterns and pausing in neutral or gunning the engine occasionally to try to trigger strikes. When you get a hit, drop a marker buoy overboard to pinpoint the spot and then troll back through the area in case there's an active, feeding school in the vicinity.

Downriggers will allow you to troll shallow-running minnow and shad imitating plugs or bucktails at exactly the depth the stripers are hanging. You can also use deep-diving plugs without a downrigger and still reach the stripers in Leesville, since they seldom hold much over 25 feet deep, due to the oxygen circulation from the pump-back operation. Plugs such as the Whopper-Stopper, Water Dog, Storm Big Mac, Hellbender, Bagley Deep-



*Ralph Key and Dale Wilson show their fine Leesville stripers.*

Diver Shad, Cordell Deep-Diver Redfin, Rebel Deep Minnow and Spoon-bill all dive down to the 12- to 25-foot depths that are usually productive, when trolled on 12- to 17-pound line. I also like to rig a 17-pound trailer leader 3- to 4-feet long with either a quarter-ounce white jig on it, or just a worm hook with a plastic twister tail attached. You can either tie the leader to the center hook of the forward treble on the plug or remove the rear treble hook and tie the leader on there. Some lures work best one way, some the other, so check the action and experiment before using this rig.

Trolling has never produced a large number of stripers for me on Leesville, but it almost always yields from one to three or four fish for a day's effort. Most of these are good-sized specimens in the 12- to 20-pound class.

Live bait fishing is the secret a few locals use to catch massive stripers in the 20- to 30-pound class. They employ big gizzard shad, suckers, or large shiners hooked through the lips or back on a 1/4/0 hook with a 1/4- to 1-ounce sliding sinker and a split shot or swivel rigged to keep the weight 18- to 36-inches above the bait. You can drift, slow-troll with an electric motor or anchor over fish located on the depth finder with this live bait set-up. Try creek mouths, points, islands, the edges of river channels and underwater humps. Depths of 30- to 50-feet seem to hold the most stripers on Leesville during summer, and the fish frequently suspend at levels of 12- to 25-feet in this deeper water. Early morning, late evening and night are the best times to fool stripers with live bait.

The most intriguing method for catching Leesville stripers is casting to schools of breaking fish on top. From mid summer through late fall is the prime time for this surface sport. Be sure you have a stout line and a strong heart before you try this, for it's one of the most exciting forms of freshwater fishing imaginable.

The first time I fished Leesville was on a stormy summer day many years ago with guide Dale Wilson and Ralph Key. We left Ray's Marina in the afternoon, eased out Old Woman Creek and immediately saw breaking stripers slashing on the top. Dale ordered Ralph and me to "get down" and gunned his 18 foot Skeeter full-throttle. The 150 hp outboard shot us up to the crashing fish in seconds and Dale's first cast connected with a

lunging striper. Moments later, the 17-pound monofilament snapped like a piece of thread.

By now the fish had sounded and another group had erupted across the channel. We raced toward them and all three cast out white bucktail jigs. Only mine came back empty-handed. Dale pulled in an 8 pounder, Ralph a gorgeous 26 pound bass. We continued to probe the area, and one more fish climbed onto Wilson's slowly swimming jig—a massive 27½ pound striper. Not bad for a short afternoon on the water.

Casting to breaking stripers isn't always that productive. Indeed, there will be days when you won't even find the fish schooling on top. But when-

a few feet up to a dozen feet or more, then retrieve it steadily. Don't jig it or jerk the rod. Just reel it in smooth and easy. That's the best way possible to imitate a swimming shad.

I've encountered the most schooling activity on Leesville in the lower third of the lake. The best times to find surfacing stripers are mornings, evenings and all day when cloud cover is heavy. If you get to an area where stripers are breaking but they've already sounded, try probing the area with a bucktail jig anyway, allowing it to sink 10- to 20-feet then reeling back slowly. Another alternative is to vertical jig with a 3/4- to 1-ounce hammered metal spoon. While jigging, you should be scanning the water for signs of another school



*Topwater plugs favored for Leesville stripers.*

ever I do see the sudden swirls, splashing water, skipping shad and frothy surface that indicate feeding bass, I race to the commotion as quickly as possible and toss either topwater plugs or bucktails into the surface melee. Good lures include the Rebel Jumpin Minnow, Cordell Near Nuthin, and Pencil Popper, Whopper-Stopper Hellraiser and Bagley Stickup. Fish these with a twitching, erratic retrieve. If strikes don't come quickly, change to a bucktail, 1/3- to 3/4 ounce, in white, yellow, unpainted lead or chartreuse finish. At times it can help to add a twister tail, white plastic worm or pork rind to the jig, but often just the plain bucktail works best.

Toss the jig out and let it sink from

breaking on top nearby. When you spot such fresh surfacing activity, reel in and head for it immediately.

The limit on stripers is four per day, minimum size, 20 inches. Besides stripers, Leesville offers excellent largemouth, walleye, muskie, catfish and panfish angling.

The Virginia Game Commission maintains a launching ramp on Leesville Lake near the dam. You can reach it by taking Rt. 642 off of US 29 below Altavista, to Rt. 754. Ray's Marina is located on Old Woman Creek, off of Rt. 642. On the north shore, the Tri-County Marina is located on Rt. 733, south of Mt. Airy. For guide service, contact Dale Wilson, Rt. 1, Box 181, Huddleston, Virginia 24104 (703-297-5650.) □



# May Journal

## Virginia's "Operation Clean Water"

As the summer season approaches, more people visit the waters of Virginia to enjoy themselves. Waterskiing, boating, fishing, and simply lying in the sun are favorite pastimes of vacationers from within and outside the state. Unfortunately, there is a side effect from human activity near and on our waters that can effect us all...litter.

The problems associated with water-related litter are many. For instance, the idea that "nature will take care of it" is enhanced by the fact that litter disappears beneath the water's surface. Also, vacationers are out for a day of carefree relaxation, which may in turn lead to a decrease in responsible behavior, thereby creating more litter.

Many individuals mistakenly assume that litter on, in and around Virginia's waterways is only a visual blight. The truth of the matter is that litter can be more dangerous than merely an unsightly mess. Some problems associated with water-related litter are:

- litter on the bottom of a body of water is a frequent cause of injuries to swimmers and waders;

- semi-submerged litter damages boat propellers, can block engine intakes, or can literally be sucked into boat motors through intakes;
- waterskiers are in danger from floating or semi-submerged litter;
- litter from construction sites and from land clearing can create obstruction of waterways for boaters and swimmers;
- wildlife can be endangered by litter. Fish and animals may be trapped, wounded, or killed by litter in their habitats;
- some litter has toxic potential and can cause water pollution.

The Virginia Division of Litter Control is conducting a campaign to make the public aware of litter and the problems caused by this trash.

You can help this campaign and your Virginia waters—just don't litter! □

Division of Litter Control



**Turn Trash  
Into Cash. Recycle.**  
For Information  
Call 1-800 KEEP ITT

## Letters

### Bluebird Response

I would like to express my pleasure at the enthusiastic response to my bluebird paintings featured in the March issue of *Virginia Wildlife*. The number of letters to me expressing approval of the paintings and inquiring about the prints was overwhelming, exceeding those received from the appearance of my work on national publications! Perhaps your readers consider me their cover artist emeritus, since the very first publication of my art anywhere was a wood duck painting which appeared on the December 1954 cover. I did many paintings for the magazine over the following decade, and was always pleased with the quality of the reproductions and the reaction from readers. The opportunity to have my work seen on covers was surely invaluable in establishing my career as a wildlife artist. So to your readers—thanks again for the warm response!

Ed Bierly  
Lorton

### Page County Trout

In the March 1985 issue of *Virginia Wildlife* you omitted the listing of Page County's trout streams. This omission has led fishermen in the area to believe Page County will not be getting any trout this year.

Robert W. Inskeep  
Luray

Rainbow trout will be stocked in Page County's Cub Run and Upper Passage Creek during April and May.—Editor

O P E R A T I O N



C L E A N W A T E R

# May Journal

## Non-Game Update

### Businesses Supporting the Non-Game Program

Two Richmond based companies that we are all familiar with have gone beyond the call of duty in promoting the Non-Game Wildlife and Endangered Species Program.

Mr. James E. Ukrop, of Ukrop's Super Markets, offered the Commission the opportunity of printing a book cover on the store's grocery bags. The first series of bags had a Peregrine falcon, one of Virginia's endangered birds receiving support from the program.

The second of the series was a drawing of one of the endangered sea

turtles, the loggerhead. By providing research and collecting scientific data on both species, Virginia is a major contributor in securing these and other wildlife in the Commonwealth.

Throughout the state 15 stores received the specially printed bags. Over 2½ million bags have been given out over a two year period and that's a lot of book covers.

"We feel that many times the private sector can do things to support such beneficial programs," said Mr. Ukrop. And Ukrop's Super Markets have certainly shown its support of this program.

The name Southern States Cooperative Incorporated immediately brings to mind feeds, farm and garden supplies, and people who love and work in the outdoors.

Mr. Harris K. Swann, Group Vice President of the Southern States

Chain extended his cooperation in promoting non-game efforts. The Commission produced a "Feeding Wild Birds" pamphlet and an attractive non-game poster that were distributed to over 50 of the Cooperatives in Virginia. I'm also pleased to say that many of the stores wrote to the Commission asking for extra copies of the publications.

As Mr. Swann explained, "The people who own and operate these stores are interested in all of Virginia's wildlife." And with the response from these stores no truer statement could be made.

Ukrop's Super Markets and Southern States Cooperatives have certainly shown their concern for part of Virginia's wildlife heritage. □

by Jeffrey M. Curtis

Mr. James E. Ukrop

Mr. Harris K. Swann

photos by Roy Edwards







## Bird Sanctuaries: What They Really Mean

The arrival of spring in Virginia is always marked by the return of many migratory birds from their winter homes further south. Birds that nest here often choose secluded areas away from human traffic to make their summer residence. In some cases the areas they choose have been designated as bird sanctuaries.

Despite popular belief, these areas do not change the status of the birds within them. However, they often indicate that the area is especially

supportive of these feathered creatures. In addition, the Game Commission does not handle the process of designating a sanctuary.

Citizens interested in having a bird sanctuary declared must petition their local governing body for a resolution stating this. If the measure is approved by the municipality, the message is sent to the State Highway Department, which erects the signs in the appropriate area. The expense of the signs and their construction is paid by the local government.

While designated bird sanctuaries may indicate a particularly favorable location to observe our local bird life, remember that any of Virginia's parks and recreation areas offer a similar opportunity. □

by John Goodin

## Hiking the Old Dominion

Patrick County native Allen de Hart has trod more than 14,000 miles in 46 states and 18 foreign counties. All this walking probably makes him the ideal author for a book on hiking in Virginia. Walking through the rolling Piedmont country, along the ocean beaches and hiking the Appalachian hills, de Hart covers the state's over 3,000 miles of hiking trails in his new book, *Hiking the Old Dominion*.

For each of the more than 900 trails, the author gives route directions to the trailhead, and describes trail length and difficulty, points of interest in the surrounding countryside, botanical and zoological features, and characteristics of the region's terrain. Fourteen maps and twenty photographs supplement the trail descriptions, and addresses and telephone numbers are given for park and forest service offices.

In addition to the national parks and forests, this guide covers wildlife refuges, museums, public gardens,

and state, county and urban parks. From the famous Shenandoah Valley to the Appalachian Trail, here is the essential trail companion for visitors and natives alike.

*Hiking the Old Dominion* is published by Sierra Club Books, 2034 Filmore Street, San Francisco, California 94115. □

## Subscriber Service

If you're moving, please don't forget to let *Virginia Wildlife* know. Use the form below: attach a recent label from *Virginia Wildlife*, and fill in your new address in the blanks provided. Please allow *six to eight weeks* for a change of address to be reflected on your *Virginia Wildlife* label.

If you have questions about this, or any question concerning your *Virginia Wildlife* subscription, write to us in care of Data Processing, Virginia Game Commission, P.O. Box 11104, Richmond, Virginia 23230-1104, or call 804/257-1449.

Attach most recent address label here.

New Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_  
 State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Effective Date \_\_\_\_\_

# - May Journal

## Wolves, Pigs and Bounties

*(Wolves, Pigs and Bounties is the first of a series of articles on the history of game and fish, their management and mismanagement, written by Jim McInteer. Jim's long association with the Game Commission and his unique grasp of wildlife management and the laws effecting it, enable him to relate—often with considerable humor—the ways of game and man.)*

The first wild animals perceived to be a significant threat to the welfare of early Virginia colonists was the wolf. A bounty was placed upon his head.

The first species to enjoy protection by law from uncontrolled hunting in Virginia was not an indigenous game species but was the feral swine that roamed the woods, having ascended from imported European stock released earlier by the colonists.

Hogs that foraged at large were held to be a common property of the Colony. When this common resource was utilized largely to the benefit of those who took more than their share, at the expense of those who did not, a law was enacted in 1632 that prohibited anyone from killing a wild hog in the woods except as permitted by the Governor. The 1632 law also undertook to give the swine herd further protection by setting a bounty on the native wolves who enjoyed fresh pork as much as the colonists. With majestic logic, the bounty law offered for the head of a dead wolf the right to take (self-service), from the woods, one feral hog.

No other bounty law, providing payment either in currency or pounds of tobacco but without correlation between the amount paid and the supposed negative value of an individual of the bountied species, ever has surpassed the 1632 hog-for-wolf combination in the exquisite symmetry of its underlying rationale. Matching the reward to the deed, the law proclaimed that for terminating a

wolf a colonist was entitled to appropriate to his own use, from common property, that which well might have been so appropriated by the four-legged predator had the latter prospered a little longer.

Of course, each time a wolf succeeded in avoiding the wile of a bounty hunter, the life of one wild hog that would have paid the sacrificial bounty, was spared too.

But whatever effect all this may have had upon the swine population, the introduction of the bounty hunter into the hog-wolf equation had less than the desired effect upon the wolves. After 59 years (1691), a dead wolf commanded a bounty of 300 pounds of tobacco, and Virginia's native wolf population still outlasted, bounties and all, the Jamestown wild swine herd by more than 200 years.

In 1791 the Colony began to pay bounties on squirrels and crows, too, colonial agriculture by then having advanced to the point that it seemed to be attracting, and suffering from these "pests."

Bounty laws have worked in Virginia about as they have anywhere else. People killed wolves in the early days, and destroyed their dens and young, because people feared wolves and because wolves preyed upon both livestock and wild animals that people wanted for themselves, which is exactly what people would have done anyway without the bounty incentive. But most importantly, the human population tamed, and thus destroyed, the very wilderness ecology of which the wolf was an integral part. Not so, however, with the squirrel and the crow. Landscape alterations made by a growing human population did not destroy the essential qualities of squirrel and crow habitat, and neither bounties, nor legal hunting, nor even illegal hunting, ever have seriously depleted the numbers of these more adaptable creatures.

But the "lesson" in wildlife management didn't "take." Although proven expensive and ineffective, bounties were authorized by Virginia laws at various times from colonial days until 1978 on such species as hawks, owls, foxes, "catamount," woodchucks, and others. And when the last bounty laws were repealed in 1977 and 1978, there appeared before the very next session of the General Assembly a bill to authorize, once again, the payment of a bounty on woodchucks. It failed to pass, and its patron failed to retain his seat in the House of Delegates. It is not clear whether either introduction of this bounty bill, or failure to obtain its passage, contributed to his defeat at the polls. But let it come as no great surprise if some day the wildlife bounty is rediscovered in Virginia, and legislation again proposed to reward the removal of individuals of some wild population then perceived locally to be undesirable in its current numbers.

The enduring contribution of the 1632 colonial swine act was something far more important than a first unsuccessful effort in managing wild populations by offering bounties. Here was a law proclaiming feral animals to be a resource owned in common by the people; a resource to be managed for the common benefit of all the people; and a resource whose private possession and use was to be permitted, restricted or denied, for the common good, by the government of the people. That premise, which was to become doctrine, adopted and confirmed by legislation and case law, applicable to all wildlife throughout the United States, was first applied in North America to those lowly feral swine of the Virginia Colony. □

by Jim McInteer



# Sea Turtles Move into Chesapeake Bay for Summer

The Virginia Institute of Marine Science, through funds contributed to the Non-Game Wildlife and Endangered Species Program, will continue to monitor the sea turtles as they move into the Chesapeake Bay beginning in May. Five species of sea turtles can be found off the coastline of Virginia. The loggerhead and the green sea turtle are threatened, the Atlantic Ridley, leatherback and hawksbill are endangered. All of the species are legally protected by state and federal law.

Sea turtles differ from other aquatic turtles found throughout Virginia by having oar-like flippers, not webbed feet. Most of the turtles seen in the bay are juvenile loggerheads weighing in the range of 50 to 150 pounds. The rarest sea turtle in the world, the Atlantic Ridley, also feeds in the bay each summer, but in smaller numbers. This turtle usually weighs 30 to 50 pounds in our waters.

As the turtles move north from warm overwintering areas and swim into the Chesapeake Bay, they may become stranded in pound nets or wash onto beaches dead from boat propeller injuries, gunshot, shark predation or disease. The true cause of death cannot be determined in about 70 percent of the carcasses examined due to advanced decomposition.

For several years, cooperating fishermen have been voluntarily tagging those turtles that have gotten trapped alive in nets with a stainless steel tag on the front flipper for VIMS. The tag is similar to the ear tags worn by cattle (see *Virginia Wildlife*, June, 1983). Richard Byles and Jack Musick, who are conducting the research on sea turtles at VIMS, ask those persons sighting a stranded turtle either dead or alive to report it to the VIMS Sea Turtle Program at Gloucester Point, 804/ 642-7322. □

# About the Authors

Harry Murray is a frequent contributor and among his other pursuits, teaches fishing and fly tying in Edinburg, Virginia. John Goodin is a student at the University of Richmond, who is working as an editorial assistant through UR's Quill Program. Curtis Badger lives on Maryland's Eastern Shore and writes about the area's out-of-doors that he knows so well. Bruce Ingram lives in Catawba and has written several articles for *Virginia Wildlife*. His last article was on smallmouths in June 1984. This is the first photo essay for John Warden, a freelance photographer from Anchorage, Alaska. His last work appeared in a fox hunting article in the December 1984 issue of the magazine. Karen Terwilliger is a wildlife biologist on the staff of the Commission's game division where she coordinates most of the research and investigation work of the Non-Game Program. Gerald Almy is hunting and fishing editor for *Sports Afield*; he lives in Woodstock and has written numerous articles for *Virginia Wildlife*.



You can be sure to catch more on the pages of **VIRGINIA WILDLIFE**

Catch the big savings on the per-copy price of *Virginia Wildlife* when you buy it "by the dozen." You'll get a 65% savings on the best how-to, where-to, and when-to outdoor magazine Virginia has to offer! Mail the form below to *Virginia Wildlife*, P.O. Box 11104, Richmond, Virginia 23230-1104, or give it to your game warden.

Yes, I want to save up to 65% over the newsstand price of *Virginia Wildlife*!

Send me ☐ one year for \$5.00 ☐ three years for \$12.50  
This is a ☐ new subscription ☐ renewal ☐ gift subscription

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Please allow six to eight weeks for delivery. Credit Warden No. \_\_\_\_\_

## Subscribe Now!



JOHN W. TAYLOR



# Bird of the Month

## The Wood Duck

Exquisitely marked and strikingly, almost unbelievably, colorful, the drake wood duck ranks among the most beautiful of the waterfowl. Indeed, it holds a place among the most beautiful in the entire kingdom of birds. The resplendent hues vary with the angle of light, presenting a constant play of iridescence across the plumage.

To be fully appreciated, the bird must be seen close at hand. A crest of green and purple flows from the crown, the sides of the head reflecting the same colors, with a hint of bronzy yellow. The bright red on the bill and eyelids provide strong accents, as do harlequin-like streaks and patches of pure white.

The yellowish tan sides are delicately vermiculated with black, the upper feathers broadly tipped with black and white. The flanks, of dark burgundy, are decorated with long, ochre-colored plumes. The wing speculum, which can usually be seen while the bird is at rest, shows scintillating purples and blues.

The demure hen, sombre in comparison, also shows glints of iridescence in her predominate blues and grays. Though her bill and eye are dark, she is quite lovely in her own quiet way.

Such beauty almost brought the bird to extinction. Its brilliance made it a coveted trophy, mounted on the mantelpiece. And, at one time, there was great demand for its feathers to supply the needs of the manufacturers of artificial trout flies. At the turn of the century, prime wood duck skins brought as much as four dollars, a significant sum in those days. The gunning season lasted from September through April, with little or no bag restrictions, and the range of the wood duck coincided with areas most heavily hunted. So the losses were severe.

George Bird Grinnell, in his classic *American Duck Shooting* (1901), wrote that wood ducks "are being shot at all seasons of the year, are

becoming very scarce, and are likely to be exterminated before long." A few years later, another wildfowl researcher stated that he believed there were more wood ducks in captivity than there were in the wild.

Timely legislation and strict game laws halted the decline. In 1918, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act was signed. Market hunting was outlawed and the game laws were enforced. At the same time, the wood duck was given complete protection, a measure that was kept in force until 1941.

With such protection, the wood duck recovered quickly. By 1930, Phillips and Lincoln could report in their definitive *American Waterfowl* that this duck has "recovered markedly." The increase continued through the thirties, partly because the greatly curtailed hunting seasons reduced pressure and with it the level of illegal killing. In 1941, 14 states felt it safe to allow one wood duck in the hunter's bag. Wood ducks continued to prosper and, since the 1960's have ranked second or third in the total kill of several eastern and mid-western states. In fact the wood duck experiences a higher annual loss, percentage-wise, than any other species, a tribute to their high productivity.

Wood ducks breed throughout their range, which extends from Florida and Texas north to Quebec and Ontario, then west to the Dakotas. A distinct far western population is primarily coastal in distribution. Most of the eastern birds winter from Maryland south along the Atlantic coastal plain, the bulk of them in the deep south.

In Virginia, the wood duck is considered a resident, since birds are present the year round. However, wintering woodies are New England bred, as banding returns have shown, and those nesting locally have moved farther south, to the Carolinas and Georgia. These local breeders return early in March.

They nest in every county in the state. Censuses have shown a much higher density in the bottomland swamps of tidewater, and along the upper Potomac and its tributaries. But the wood duck adapts well to the small, faster moving streams of the Appalachians. Their only require-

ment for nesting seems to be a hollowed branch or trunk, either a natural cavity or a woodpecker excavation.

No attempt is made at nest building. The eggs are laid on the floor of the cavity. Usually, there is an accumulation of leaves and litter already in the opening, which are molded into a saucer-like depression. As the eggs are laid, the female plucks down from her breast, to provide warmth and softness. More down is added with each egg, so that when the clutch is complete, it is nearly enveloped in down.

Clutch size varies widely. Where there has been loss to predation. The female may begin incubation with but a half dozen eggs. In cases where there is more than one female contributing to the same nest, which often happens, there may be twenty or more. The usual complement is from ten to fifteen eggs. The incubation period is about thirty days.

The hen warms and coddles her young for about twenty-four hours before leaving and calling them to follow her. The ducklings jump from the nest to the ground or water, landing unhurt even though they may fall as far as sixty feet. After reassembling her family, she leads them to the nearest water—a haven seldom reached with the full brood intact.

As is often the case with waterfowl, the drake wood duck takes no part in the care and raising of the young. He departs the scene once the female begins egg laying, and joins small communes of other males. Such groups stay together until June when the annual moulting period begins.

This is a dangerous time, for the power of flight is lost temporarily, and the birds stay close to cover. As the feathers are lost and replaced, they assume a drab, inconspicuous plumage, quite similar to that of the female. This is the "eclipse" plumage, so called because the birds undergo a period of obscurity or darkness. □

by John W. Taylor

A full-color reproduction of the accompanying painting is available from the artist. Write to P.O. Box 158, Edgewater, Maryland 21037.



